DAWN

METRO South

KARACHI Friday, January 16, 2026

KARACHI

Sunset	06:05pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow)	07:17am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum	16°C
Maximum	26°C
Humidity	68%
Outlook	Partly Cloudy

Sinner to face Gaston in Australian Open first round

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Sealing of heritage site ordered

By Tahir Siddiqui

KARACHI: Following the detection of illegal renovation and repair work on the Baweja Building, a protected heritage site, the Sindh Antiquities and Archaeology Department directed the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) on Thursday to seal the building.

The protected structure, located on Mir Karam Ali Talpur Road, Saddar, dates back to 1925 and showcases a striking Anglo-Mughal architectural style, featuring cupolas and large domes. Its stonework is richly detailed, with ornate arches and decorative motifs that catches the eye.

Originally constructed as a commercial office building, the Baweja House now houses a mix of serviced apartments, corporate offices and a small shopping mall on the lower floors.

Because of its historic character and well-preserved facade, it is listed as a heritage property (SD-P-192) in Karachi's cultural heritage register.

Speaking to *Dawn*, Director General of the Antiquities and Archaeology Department Abdul Fatah Shaikh said the owner/builder/contractor, Muhammad Asif Sultan, was issued a show-cause notice in October last year for carrying out unauthorised demolition work on the Baweja Building without obtaining prior permission from the department, in violation of the Sindh Cultural Heritage (Preservation) Act, 1994.

He said the owner/builder was asked to appear in the department in person and explain his position on October 13, 2025.

The DG said that the building owner did not appear; however, the demolition and renovation work was stopped. "Later, he was again directed to appear on November 14 last year, but he did not turn up," he added.

Mr Shaikh said he had written to the SBCA, the deputy commissioner, the SSP of District South and the area SHO to take action against the illegal work at the building.

Under the provisions of the Act, no demolition, alteration or construction activity is permitted on or around a declared heritage building without prior approval from the Technical/Advisory Committee on Sindh Cultural Heritage.

The DG said he had written to the SBCA to ensure that the illegal demolition work was stopped immediately and that the building also be sealed.

He added that no construction work or development should be permitted on the building until a final decision is made by the technical committee.

It may be noted that the city's architectural heritage remains at stake as unauthorised demolition and illegal constructions at colonial-era buildings and monuments continue despite checks.

SCAFFOLDING and protective netting has been installed on the Baweja Building ahead of construction work.—Fahim Siddiqi / White Star

Notices issued to schools defying winter timings notification

- While many institutions followed the notification, many completely ignored it
- Some parents found nothing wrong with old timings, others only too happy to send their children to school later than usual

By Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: Noting that many schools, including a few elite ones, have completely ignored the School Education and Literacy Department's directive on new start-time for schools, the department has issued them with stern warning letters.

Under the notification issued over the weekend, all public and private educational institutions in Sindh were asked to switch to 9am as the start of school time for two weeks due to the prevailing cold wave.

Many schools followed the order, but several schools completely ignored the notification.

According to Additional Director Registration, Professor Rafia Javed, all private schools are bound to implement the notification.

"Any school violating the guidelines issued by us for the two weeks will see action taken against them," the official warned. "You are disobeying Education Minister Sardar Shah here," she reminded.

Parents divided over new timings

While the directive from the Sindh government regarding revising school start timings sounded considerate, it has met with mixed reactions during the first week.

Many parents find nothing wrong with the old timings while some happily accept the new schedule.

"The issue is not the cold wave. It is the problems that children and parents face in the cold," one little girl's father told *Dawn*.

"For starters there is the gas shortage. The geyser turns off during the nightlong gas loadshedding and it takes a while for the water to heat up after turning the geyser on. The gas is still not back when the children are getting ready for school. They wash their face and brush their teeth with ice cold water. There is no gas for them to even have breakfast. They will fall ill like this, we worry," he pointed out.

"So the delay by one to one-and-a-half hours gives some respite," he added.

Then the first day of sending his child to school at 9am made the same father think again. "My daughter returned home at around 5pm. She is tired. She is hungry since she missed lunch but now she is too tired to even eat. This is a huge inconvenience," he regretted.

Other parents, too, whose children had to stay in school for longer because classes started late and therefore ended late, were also unhappy. One school ran polls in their class Whatsapp groups for the parents to choose between the old timings and the new ones. With a majority there opting for the old timings in view of the classes being moved forward causing extended school hours, the school reverted to the old timings after observing the new timings for one day.

"I don't find anything wrong with the old timings and am glad that my children's school ignored the government order. I mean, why disturb routine?" Said the mother of two middle school children of an elite school in Saddar, which also happens to have a

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Chief secretary told to take action against KDA director general for disregarding court orders

SHC orders full payment of post-retirement dues; asks alleged contemnors to appear before bench in person

By Ishaq Tanoli

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court has warned that coercive action will be taken against director general of the Karachi Development Authority and others for not complying with its orders about payment of pensionary benefits to retried employees.

A two-judge constitutional bench of SHC headed by Justice Adnan-ul-Karim Memon noted that it was constrained to direct chief secretary Sindh to initiate disciplinary proceedings against DG KDA and other delinquents.

It also directed them to comply with its earlier orders in letter and spirit about full payment of the benefits to petitioner, observing that "complete compliance has not been made".

Some retired employees of KDA had petitioned the SHC in 2024 seeking directives for KDA and other respondents for payment of their pensionary benefits. They had later filed contempt applications against the DG and other officials of KDA for flouting court orders.

The bench in its order noted that in August last year, the court had categorically directed the respondents to ensure payment of outstanding pensionary dues to petitioners within two months failing which contempt proceedings to be initiated against them.

It also observed that an interim compliance report has been filed by the KDA stating that the authority has been facing a longstanding financial crisis.

It asserted that billions of rupees have already been paid to around 1,407 retired employees of KDA in respect of post-retirement benefits in pursuant to the earlier orders of the SHC.

The report also maintained that the finance & accounts department of KDA, in a letter dated Jan 13, has suggested some measures to address financial shortfall, including enhancement of monthly payment for KDA from finance department Sindh and one-time grant of Rs3,000 million was also under process with the department.

It further suggested that KDA has revised land transaction rate and expected to generate additional revenue in order to improve its fiscal position. The report stated that officers of the authority held the judiciary in highest esteem and has no intention of disobeying its orders.

The bench in its order said: "However, as full compliance has not yet been made effected, in such circumstances of the case, coupled with the issue of pensionary benefits of petitioners, which is of paramount consideration, this court is constrained to direct the chief secretary

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Two suspects gunned down in separate 'encounters'

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: An alleged extortionist and a suspected robber were shot dead in two separate "encounters" in the metropolis on Thursday, police said.

Special Investigation Unit (SIU) SSP Dr Mohammed Imran Khan said that acting on a tip-off, an SIU team conducted a raid to arrest an alleged extortionist, identified as Zeeshan, associated with the Jameel Changa gang, in the Moachko area.

He added that in an ensuing exchange of fire, Zeeshan was gunned down, and a bike, a pistol and a cell phone were recovered from his custody.

"The killed suspect was a hit-man and the ringleader of the Jameel Changa gang," said the officer, adding that he was involved in several firing incidents to extract extortion money.

Last month, he and his associates had shot and wounded two persons while delivering an 'extortion note' to a builder of an under-construction apartment in the Garden area.

Before that, he was also involved in extortion and firing targeting shopkeepers, traders and builders in the Soldier Bazaar area.

The police have also obtained his criminal record, which showed that there were six FIRs registered against him pertaining to extortion, terrorism and illegal arms.

Separately, Bilal Colony police claimed to have gunned down a suspected robber allegedly involved in the recent killing of a young man over the snatching of a mobile phone.

Central SSP Zeeshan Shafiq Siddiqi told *Dawn* that the exchange of fire took place in Sector-5-B near Eid Gah Ground.

As a result, one suspect, identified as Jehanzeb alias Mama, was gunned down while his associate, Jibran, managed to escape by a motorcycle.

One 9mm pistol with rounds was recovered from his custody, the officer added.

The body was shifted to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for medico-legal formalities.

"The killed suspect had shot dead 18-year-old Saad over resistance to a cell phone snatching a few days ago within the jurisdiction of Bilal Colony," claimed SSP Siddiqi.

The police had obtained his past criminal record, which revealed that at least 10 FIRs had been registered against him at various police stations, pertaining to a range of crimes.

CM Afridi pays second visit to city

KARACHI: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sohail Khan Afridi on Thursday paid a one-day visit to the metropolis to offer condolences to the family of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) worker Bilal Mehsud, who died in an accident during a party rally in the Sohrab Goth area.

The visit came only days after CM Afridi had returned to Peshawar earlier this week following a four-day tour of Sindh, underscoring the party leadership's emphasis on standing with its workers during times of grief.

He was accompanied by PTI Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh, Karachi President Raja Azhar and other senior party leaders.

A large number of PTI supporters and workers gathered at Sohrab Goth to receive the chief minister and participate in the condolence proceedings.

Mr Afridi, addressing the gathering, described party workers as PTI's most valuable asset and said that the leadership was duty-bound to protect them.—Staff Reporter

Awami Theatre Festival to kick off on 22nd

Around 30 plays to be staged in Urdu and other regional languages, organisers say

By Peerzada Salman

KARACHI: The annual Awami Theatre Festival organised by the Arts Council of Pakistan will take place from Jan 22 to Feb 15, announced the council's President Ahmed Shah at a press conference on Thursday evening.

Mr Shah said the festival is part of the council's tradition. "It happens after the World Culture Festival which concluded in December (2025). After that there was the International Urdu Conference followed by the holy month of Ramazan.

The weather conditions are good. We discussed all of this with our colleagues who are associated with theatre.

We came to the conclusion that before Ramazan, there could be a month-long event in which lovers of theatre would be entertained.

All senior directors are taking part in the festival. In fact, our senior artist, director and classical dancer Sheema Kermani is also doing a play. Since she is connected with the people. She always says that she will participate in the Awami Theatre Festival."

He said the council has a rich history of such events. Artists who worked on its premises such as Moin Akhtar, Umar Sharif, Sikandar Sanam and Liaquat Soldier, who are no longer in this world, became popular. "We have thus far finalised 30 plays. We will do two dramas on weekends. It will all begin on Jan 22 and Feb 15 will be the last day."

The Vice-President of the Council, Munawwar Saeed, gave a piece of advice to the artists who will be seen in action at the event. He said they should be honest with the characters that they're asked to play.

Mr Shah then again addressed the media and said although most of the plays are in Urdu, there are dramas in Punjabi, Sindhi, Seraiki and Balochi languages. "For the last 18 years, we have been telling our theatre friends that we would give you financial support and make sets for you but to make the play a worthy quality piece depends on the director. "In the beginning there were issues. This is the Arts Council. Here you are allowed to have creative liberty, but coming up with vulgar stuff in the name of creative ability is not acceptable."

The festival will kick off with *Seedhi Jalebi* directed by Shakil Shah and end with *Mujh Mein Tu Mojud* presented by Tehrik-i-Niswan.

(LEFT to right) Arts Council Secretary Eijaz Farooqi, President Ahmed Shah, Vice President Munawwar Saeed, and Drama Committee Chairman Shehzad Raza Naqvi attend the press conference.—White Star